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CHAIRMAN ACKERMAN'S OPENING STATEMENT FOR
HEARING ON ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES -- April 24, 1985

I would like to call to order this second day of hearings on the reauthorization of the Federal Employees Flexible and Compressed Work Schedules Act.

H.R. 1534, which I introduced, would amend Public Law 97-221 by repealing the sunset provision of the Alternative Work Schedule program; this would make the program permanent. I have scheduled a mark-up of the bill immediately following this morning's hearing.

On March 28, the Subcommittee on Human Resources heard testimony from Representatives Schroeder and Wolf, and from the Office of Personnel Management and the General Accounting Office. The consensus was unanimous in supporting permanent reauthorization of the Alternative Work Schedule Program. OPM and GAO cited increased productivity, increased service to the public, and increased employee morale as among the reasons for reauthorizing the program.

However, this past Thursday afternoon my office received an Administration proposal to amend the Federal Employees Flexible and Compressed Work Schedules Act -- 3 weeks after Donald Devine claimed that the language would be available to the Subcommittee "shortly." Almost a month is not "shortly" in my dictionary.

OPM's language attempts to address an alleged problem perceived by Donald Devine -- that somehow paying federal employees on compressed schedules their rightful wages costs the government a substantial amount of money. He calls this a "windfall". At no time has the Administration demonstrated the alleged cost to the government by paying employees on compressed schedules their normal wages for such days. OPM had ample opportunity to prove their case through their 1984 survey, which asked all agencies to identify any problems with holiday pay; however, only one Air Force base (out of 135 bases) indicated any cost because of a compressed work schedule. Ironically, it was that same base which OPM cited 2 years ago as having saved \$98,000 because of reduced overtime under its compressed schedule. No other agency mentioned this as a problem, and, in fact, most agencies say that compressed schedules lead to savings. I think that the agencies, not Dr. Devine, are right.

For the past six years, the productivity of the federal workforce has improved because of flexible and compressed work schedules. The public's access to agencies have increased, and the morale of civil servants have improved. I believe that the Office of Personnel Management proposal is nickel and diming our work force in an attempt to gut the flexibility of the current law and employee's influence over their schedules. Even though OPM's language was only received by my staff 4 work days ago, I have instructed them to further investigate OPM's language.

At this time, however, I strongly prefer to reauthorize that which we know works, rather than risk the unknown consequences of enacting the OPM amendments.